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NEWS RELEASE

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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES \$265,000 GRANT TO FUND NEW INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN TASK FORCE IN FRESNO

FRESNO – United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that the Fresno County Sheriff's Department has been selected to receive a grant of \$265,000 to form and operate a new Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. The funding will be provided through the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention which is part of the Office of Justice Programs.

In addition to Fresno County, the newly-funded task force also will include in its jurisdiction the counties of Merced, Mariposa, Tulare, Kern, Kings and Madera. Four task forces – in San Jose, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Diego – already have been receiving funding within California. State and local agencies in eleven other states without ICAC task forces also were selected to receive approximately \$3.3 million in new funding. The new grants will bring to 59 the total number of ICAC task forces operating in all fifty states, with a total funding of \$17 million for all task forces.

United States Attorney Scott stated, "The creation of a new Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force in Fresno will only strengthen this region's steadfast commitment to aggressively prosecute those who use the Internet to exploit children. This additional funding will help ensure that we will continue to be able to prosecute deserving cases and seek appropriately severe federal penalties for these serious crimes of violence." For the past three years, the Eastern District of California has prosecuted more cases connected to the sexual exploitation of children than any other U.S. Attorney's Office in the nation.

Fresno County Sheriff Margaret Mims commented that, "This grant enables us to further our regional efforts to fight crime. The funds will be used to expand our already successful partnership with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Task Force."

The ICAC Task Force Program is an important component of the U.S. Department of Justice's Project Safe Childhood (PSC) initiative. The goal of Project Safe Childhood is to investigate and prosecute crimes against children facilitated through the Internet or other electronic media and communication devices. PSC is implemented through a partnership of U.S. Attorneys; ICAC Task Forces; federal partners, including the FBI, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Marshals Service; advocacy organizations such as the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children; and other state and local law enforcement officials in each U.S. Attorney's

district. Other aspects of the program include increased federal involvement in child pornography and enticement cases; training of federal, state, and local law enforcement on investigating and prosecuting computer-facilitated crimes against children; and community awareness and educational programs.

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